

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652; GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION

1. GIVEN PRESS HANDLING OF AMBASSADOR BROWN'S APRIL 8 TALK WITH JUMBLATT, COUPLED WITH HOSTILE EDITORIAL IN TISHRIIN, WE SHOULD GET SOME REPORT TO ASAD ABOUT THIS CONVERSATION. AS YOU POINT OUT IN YOUR 2118, THERE IS NO DOUBT SOME CONTINUING SYRIAN DISTRUST OF OUR ROLE IN LEBANON DESPITE OUR ATTEMPTS TO REASSURE THEM. WE HAVE DESIGNED THE FOLLOWING POINTS, WHICH YOU SHOULD CONVEY TO ASAD FROM ME, TO BE REASSURING, YET TO RESPECT BROWN'S WISH THAT WE NOT PASS ALONG JUMBLATT'S THOUGHTS AT THIS POINT.

A. THE SECRETARY WOULD LIKE PRESIDENT ASAD TO KNOW THAT AMBASSADOR BROWN MET AT SOME LENGTH APRIL 8 WITH JUMBLATT, COVERING GENERALLY THE SAME SUBJECTS HE HAD COVERED IN HIS APRIL 5 TALK WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP. IN THE COURSE

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OF THE CONVERSATION, BROWN URGED JUMBLATT TO REMEMBER THAT

THE SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON HAD BEEN HELPFUL. FOR THE U.S. PART, HE TOLD JUMBLATT, WE WANT TO SEE A REUNIFIED, PEACEFUL LEBANON, PLAYING ITS NATURAL ROLE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN WORLD. WE DO NOT WISH TO SEE DRASTIC CHANGES IN THE COUNTRY WHICH COULD CREATE

GREATER PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE.

B. WITH RESPECT TO THE QUESTION OF WHO SHOULD SUCCEED FRANGIE AS PRESIDENT, AMBASSADOR BROWN STATED THAT HE WAS DEFINITELY NOT GOING TO PLAY ANY ROLE IN SELECTING THE PRESIDENT AND WAS RESISTING ALL EFFORTS TO GET HIM INVOLVED IN THIS CHOICE.

C. AMBASSADOR BROWN EXPECTED TO BE MEETING WITH SOME OF JUMBLATT'S ASSOCIATES AND HOPES TO RECEIVE THROUGH THEM JUMBLATT'S THOUGHTS ABOUT THE POINTS THEY DISCUSSED. THE SECRETARY WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH PRESIDENT ASAD FURTHER ABOUT THESE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEBANESE SITUATION.

2. FYI: I APPRECIATED YOUR ANALYSIS OF THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD DEAN BROWN'S ACTIVITIES. IT DOES SEEM INCREASINGLY CLEAR, WITH THE CONTINUED LACK OF RESPONSE ON THE SYRIAN SIDE TO OUR REPORTS OF DEAN'S ACTIVITIES, THAT THE SYRIANS ARE GOING ABOUT DEALING WITH THE SECURITY AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN THEIR OWN WAY. WITH RECENT NEWS OF SYRIAN MILITARY MOVES IN THE EAST AND NORTH, WE WILL CONTINUE TO WATCH FOR ANY SIGNS THAT THE SYRIANS MAY SHOW TOO HEAVY A HAND AND DRIVE JUMBLATT AND POSSIBLY OTHERS INTO REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS ON THE GROUNDS OF EXTERNAL PRESSURE. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, AS DEAN COMMENTS, THAT IF THE SYRIANS RELAXED A BIT ON JUMBLATT IT MIGHT HELP BRING HIM ALONG. AT THIS STAGE, HOWEVER, WE FEEL THAT ANY ATTEMPT OF OURS TO GUIDE THE SYRIAN HAND IN THIS RESPECT WOULD BE UNWELCOME AND WITHOUT EFFECT. IN ANY EVENT, DEVELOPMENTS OF PAST COUPLE OF DAYS DO NOT REPEAT NOT INDICATE THAT SYRIANS ARE OVERPLAYING THEIR HAND SO FAR.

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3. RIFAI TOLD TOM PICKERING APRIL 7 THAT HE AND HUSSEIN HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE MIDDLE EAST THAT DAY, POSSIBLY DIRECTLY WITH THE SYRIANS. PRESUMABLY AS A RESULT OF THIS CONVERSATION, THE JORDANIANS TOLD US IT WAS UNLIKELY THE SYRIANS WOULD BE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE JOINT FORCE IDEA DEAN WAS FLOATING, AND THEY PREDICTED WE WOULD RECEIVE A MUDDY ANSWER FROM THE SYRIANS TO THE QUESTIONS WE POSED TO THEM ABOUT BROWN'S SOUNDINGS. IN THEIR CONVERSATION

WITH TOM PICKERING ON THE MATTER, THE JORDANIANS THEMSELVES SHOWED A LITTLE SUSPICION ABOUT THE NATURE OF OUR CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT, AND PICKERING THOUGHT IT LIKELY THIS WAS A REFLECTION OF CONCERNS THEY HAD HEARD FROM THE SYRIANS.

4. WITH THE LEBANESE NOW HAVING SET THE PRESIDENTIAL

TRANSITION PROCESS IN MOTION AND WITH THE SYRIANS EVIDENTLY DETERMINED TO CLAMP DOWN IN THE SECURITY FIELD (THEIR APPARENT SEA BLOCKADE AND THEIR TROOP MOVEMENTS), WE ARE CLEARLY STILL IN A CRITICAL PERIOD. I WILL WANT YOUR CONTINUING BEST JUDGMENT AS TO WHAT THE SYRIANS ARE AIMING TO DO AND HOW WE MIGHT BEST RELATE TO IT. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT ALSO FOR DEAN TO HAVE THESE JUDGMENTS.

5. I DO NOT THINK, HOWEVER, THAT WE SHOULD APPEAR OVERLY ANXIOUS ABOUT ABSENCE OF REPLIES FROM ASAD, OR THAT WE SHOULD MAKE OUR EFFORTS IN LEBANON TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON SYRIAN VIEWS. WE HAVE SEEN THOSE EFFORTS AS SUPPORTING SYRIAN STRATEGY IN MANY WAYS, AND AT LEAST IN SHORT RUN WE HAVE SEEN CONSIDERABLE OVERLAP BETWEEN U.S. AND SYRIAN INTERESTS IN LEBANON. WE HAVE OUR OWN INTERESTS IN LEBANON, HOWEVER, WHICH MAY WELL NOT COINCIDE WITH SYRIAN INTERESTS IN LONGER RUN, AND WE NEED TO MAINTAIN OUR OWN FREEDOM OF ACTION WHILE AVOIDING TO EXTENT POSSIBLE PURSUING OUR EFFORTS IN WAYS THAT WOULD COMPLICATE WHAT SYRIANS ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH THEIR POLITICAL MEDIATION. FOR ABOVE REASONS, YOU SHOULD NOT PRESS ANY FURTHER WITH DAOUDI OR OTHERS FOR RESPONSE TO OUR MANY MESSAGES TO ASAD. OUR POSTURE SHOULD BE THAT WHEN THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO US, WE ARE READY TO LISTEN; MEANWHILE WE WILL CONTINUE TO DO WHAT IN OUR JUDGMENT WILL BEST CONTRIBUTE
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TO MAINTAINING CEASEFIRE AND ACHIEVING POLITICAL SOLUTION IN LEBANON AND TO PREVENTING LEBANESE CRISIS FROM UPSETTING REGIONAL STABILITY. END FYI.

6. ONE FINAL POINT. WHEN YOU SEE DAOUDI, YOU SHOULD TELL HIM THAT WE HAVE BEEN SURPRISED AT WAY U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON HAS BEEN PORTRAYED IN SOME SYRIAN MEDIA, THOUGH WE HAVE UP TO NOW KEPT SILENT ABOUT IT. WE HAVE NOW NOTED PARTICULARLY SHARP CRITICISM IN TISHRIIN EDITORIAL (DAMASCUS 2151), HOWEVER, AND MUST SAY THAT WE FIND IT BOTH PUZZLING AND DISTURBING, SINCE IT IS SO AT VARIANCE WITH FACTS AS BOTH SARG AND WE KNOW THEM. THIS KIND OF ARTICLE DOES NOT SERVE OBJECTIVES WE BOTH SEEK EITHER IN LEBANON OR IN BROADER SEARCH FOR JUST PEACE IN AREA, AND WE WANT TO CONVEY TO SARG OUR DEEP CONCERN AT

THIS UNWARRANTED ATTACK ON U.S. POLICIES AND ACTIONS.
KISSINGER

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